

Creating major sales
Overview - *SPIN*[®] selling



Ever wonder why you're employed?

What a question! Just stupid, or impertinent as well? But think about it for a moment. As a sales professional, selling a high-value product or service, you're a very expensive piece of hardware. So what's the real reason your company invests so much money to have you around?

You look after your customers, keep them happy, try to develop them. Certainly, but customer care could be done by a much cheaper resource. Maybe you write specifications and proposals. But those could be prepared more cost-effectively by somebody in a technical department. You

negotiate contract terms. Fine; that's a skill, but it could be done by your legal or commercial people.

Creating major sales

The most fundamental reason why you're employed, the unique function that you alone fulfil, which could not form part of anyone else's job description, is the creation of sales where they would not otherwise exist. Not passively responding to requests for proposals, but creating a need from scratch, developing it into a desire for positive change and demonstrating that your product can meet the need by giving the desired change.

Next question: If creating major sales is the unique contribution you bring to the party, how do you do it? Not vague generalisations, but blow-by-blow detail. How do you open a sales call? Do you ask questions? How? What kind? What about? What responses do you listen for from the prospect? What do they indicate? When do you present your product or service? What do you say about it? How do you gain the prospect's commitment? Why do some sales calls succeed and some fail? How do you measure success or failure? What do you do that causes success or failure?

Got all the answers? OK. But are you sure they're right? Would you bet your house? Worrying isn't it? Because if any of your answers are wrong it means you've lost your house and you don't totally understand the most important function of your job.

Huthwaite has the answers. And we're sure they're right – so sure we'd bet our company on it.

Let us explain why.

Science applied to major sales

Almost thirty years ago Huthwaite was approached by several major multinationals. They asked us to investigate the process of creating major sales, with a view to defining once and for all the skills used by the most effective sales professionals.

These multinationals did not come to Huthwaite because we were acknowledged experts in sales training (we certainly weren't!) but because we had a unique research methodology, which had already proven itself by providing revolutionary insights into interactive management skills.

Developed as an aid to behavioural scientific research, Behaviour Analysis was pioneered by Huthwaite as a method for observing, categorising and quantifying objectively what people say to each other in interactive situations such as meetings, job interviews, appraisals – or sales calls.

When we have observed enough interactions and analysed them statistically we can isolate very accurately the pattern of behaviours that is most likely to produce a successful outcome in a meeting, interview, appraisal, sales call, etc. We call this ideal pattern of behaviour the Success Model.

Once we have a Success Model for a particular skill we can train people to modify their behaviour to match the Success Model more closely and so improve the probability of success. And that's what our multinational clients wanted: the Success Model for creating major sales.

The SPIN® research

Very early in the research project it became apparent that there is a great difference between what top sales performers say they do and what they are actually observed doing in front of customers. The problem seems to be that the things that make top performers consistently good are the things they do naturally, whereas the points they will stress in an interview, or pass on to others as tips, are the small extra sophistications they have either invented themselves or had to work hard to master.

Having identified this discrepancy between perception and reality, the Huthwaite team implemented a programme of field accompaniments to conduct live Behaviour Analysis of sales transactions. So controversial were the initial findings in their contradiction of conventional sales theory that the scope of the study was expanded several times until the research results were statistically incontrovertible.

The process is on-going. For nearly thirty years Huthwaite has analysed over 40,000 sales interviews in 27 countries and studied 116 factors, which might play some part in improving sales performance. This remains the largest ever investigation into sales success.

The nine key behaviours that lie at the heart of the SPIN® selling model are the distilled results of this research.

Optimising skills with SPIN®

Not surprisingly, this invaluable research has been turned into a training programme, which gives all sales professionals the

opportunity to optimise their performance by adopting the SPIN® Success Model. An overview of the SPIN® Selling Skills

programme is overleaf, followed by a summary of some of the key research findings.

Overview – SPIN® selling

Objectives

By the end of the programme each participant will:

- have analysed the strengths and weaknesses of their present selling style
- be able to describe the psychology of customer needs
- be able to describe the key behaviours, or skills, used by effective salespeople in their interactions with customers
- have a framework for planning sales calls in terms of these behaviours
- have frequently practised using the skills to develop customer needs in a way that greatly reduces the likelihood of objections
- have a strategy for dealing with difficult customers who raise objections or have low reaction levels
- have measured objectively their performance compared with the Skill Model and created an Action Plan for continued development of the skills after the programme.

Target audience

Any employees involved in the sale of goods or services, which are seen as high-value, important decisions by the buyer. In addition to the obvious audience of sales executives and sales managers, this programme can be very beneficial to engineers, technical specialists or sales support staff who are involved in the selling process or who may be exposed to selling opportunities in the course of their work with customers.

Programme content

- Basic principles of Behaviour Analysis – how it is used in research and skill development.
- Understanding your present selling style – are you a natural ‘pusher’ or ‘puller’.
- The psychology of customer needs – Implied and Explicit Needs defined – what they tell you about the customer’s state of mind – which needs predict success in the sale.
- Opening the call – avoiding a ‘canned’ approach – establishing the right to ask questions.

- The SPIN® Model for developing needs:
 - Situation Questions
 - Problem Questions
 - Implication Questions
 - Need-payoff Questions.
- Demonstrating your capability – the real definition of a Benefit – dangers of Features and Advantages.
- Objections – the myth exploded; they don’t indicate interest or opportunity – how to prevent them – how to handle them.
- Low Reactors – how to identify them – why they are dangerous – how to handle them.
- Closing – why early, frequent closing is dangerous – the one, simple way to gain a commitment.

Training design and methodology

The objective of this programme is to teach skills, to change trainees' behaviour so that they perform more effectively. The training design is therefore based on the principle that *learning is doing*.

The Skill Model is introduced incrementally in 'bite-sized chunks', with a roleplay practice opportunity at each stage. Participants are not required to perform in front of the training group. Roleplays are conducted one-to-one and tape recorded. Trainees are also taught the rudiments of SPIN® Behaviour Analysis so that, aided by the trainer, they can analyse the recordings of their roleplays and give each other objective feedback on their actual performance compared to the Success Model.

This repetitive cycle of input–practice–feedback helps trainees match their behaviour ever closer to the Success Model as the course progresses and equips them with the tools for continuing skill improvement post-course.

Materials

There are comprehensive exercises and transcripts of sales calls to test and refine trainees' understanding of the Skill Model, plus a library of user-friendly reference material giving detailed explanations of key concepts.

Roleplay scenarios can be customised to simulate the sale of the trainees' own products or services to typical customers in their market.

Duration

Designs are varied to suit individual client requirements.

Faculty and group size

The SPIN® programme is delivered by a senior Huthwaite consultant experienced, whenever possible, in the client's industry sector. To ensure that each participant receives individual attention and feedback, training group size is limited to a maximum of twelve.

SPIN® research highlights

The full, fascinating story of the research studies and the development of the SPIN® Selling Skills model can be found in *Making Major Sales*, written by Neil Rackham, founder of Huthwaite. Here we have space to mention only a few of the research findings which gave the world a new insight into high-value selling skills.

All ‘needs’ are not the same

Conventional training treats all need statements as generic: *‘Find a need, meet it and you have a sale.’* Yet common sense says that there is a clear difference between a customer who complains, *“My present system is a bit slow”* and one who says, *“I need a faster system immediately.”*

Huthwaite’s research proved that there is a clear distinction between statements of dissatisfaction, called Implied Needs, and statements of desire for a solution, named Explicit Needs. In major sales Implied Needs have no statistical relationship with success, whereas Explicit Needs are key indicators of a successful outcome. Successful salespeople use a questioning technique to convert Implied Needs to Explicit.

Conventional ‘probing’ does not work

Probing (sales jargon for asking questions) is supposed to uncover customer needs. To achieve this, traditional training uses a seventy year old theory that divides questions into two types:

- *Closed* questions, which can have yes/no answers, and
- *Open* questions, which require a longer answer.

The research revealed two major problems with this approach: 60% of Closed questions actually receive long answers, because people like to talk, and, not surprisingly, there was no identifiable pattern of Open or Closed questions in successful sales calls. Classifying questions by their form, Open or Closed, has no relevance in creating major sales!

Successful salespeople use a four-stage questioning model

Rather than classifying questions by their form, exceptional sales performers use four types of questions, which are categorised by their purpose:

- **Situation Questions** – to gather background information and understand the context of the sale.
- **Problem Questions** – to explore the customer’s dissatisfactions and concerns.
- **Implication Questions** – that develop apparently isolated problems by examining their ‘knock-on’ effect on other areas of the customer’s business.
- **Need-payoff Questions** – that invite the customer to consider the benefits of solving his or her problems and, having done so, to express an Explicit Need for a solution.

‘Benefit’ statements are the major cause of objections

Generations of salespeople have been taught to make ‘benefit’ statements by explaining how their product is intended to help or be of advantage to the customer. Yet the Huthwaite studies showed that the easiest way to create an objection is to offer the customer an advantage that has not been asked for.

The true Benefit statement, the behaviour most closely associated with success, shows how your product or service satisfies an Explicit Need for which the customer has expressed a desire for a solution. Golden rule: no Explicit Need; don’t talk about your product!

Developing SPIN® selling skills

Understanding the SPIN® Selling Skills Model is relatively easy. But, even for experienced salespeople who are already using SPIN® behaviours unconsciously, putting the model into practice at a consciously competent level is fiendishly difficult.

We also recognise that implementing a SPIN® culture is further complicated by the very diverse sales structure, internal training resources and budget requirements of different clients. Huthwaite has therefore provided several implementation methods, offering considerable flexibility, but retaining the content and delivery quality of the programme overviewed in this brochure.

- Huthwaite consultants can train your salesforce directly, running a four-day course in-company.
- We offer 'Spin®-Online' – a technology-enabled solution, more details are available on request.

- We can train your trainers to run the same course and supply them with materials.
- We offer regular Public Courses for clients with only small numbers of salespeople.
- To ensure post-course support for SPIN® trainees we offer a four-day course to give sales managers observation, feedback and coaching skills.
- Huthwaite consultants are always available to assist in field implementation, coaching or refresher training.
- For multinational clients we have the capability to deliver SPIN® training in local language throughout most of the developed and developing world.

The ultimate objective is to ensure that SPIN® works for our clients. Experience, and some very objective measurement, including independent studies by third party consultants (ask for copies of our reports on WF Electrical or Motorola), show that it does. Which probably explains why the worldwide list of SPIN® users includes such companies as ABB, Bayer Diagnostics, Baxter Healthcare, Eversheds, General Electric, IBM, Oracle Corporation, Peugeot, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Royal Bank of Scotland, Shell, SKF, Sony, Standard Life Healthcare, Sun Microsystems, UPS.

If you'd like to join them, contact us and arrange a meeting with a Huthwaite International consultant to explore how SPIN® could help you improve your sales effectiveness.

Your next step...

I need further information



Please have a Huthwaite consultant contact me.



Please send me more information about Huthwaite International and the following skill sets:

- Developing major accounts
- Key account management
- Presentations & proposals
- Sales awareness for marketing
- Winning business from corporate entertaining
- Coaching skills
- Negotiation
- Sales management skills
- Selling skills

How to contact us



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